

1988

Poems and Stories

Mudrooroo Narogin

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Recommended Citation

Narogin, Mudrooroo, Poems and Stories, *Kunapipi*, 10(1), 1988.
Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol10/iss1/6>

Poems and Stories

Abstract

Paperbark, CELEBRATION OF A NATION, 'COOKALINGEE' (For Elsie Lewis), STORY NOT FINISHED

Paperbark

Perhaps before I get into the main channel of this paper which will be menandering like the Brisbane River, though I trust it will have spots of note, of beauty and sacred significance, as well as clumps of paperbark trees along its banks, I should explain the title. Paperbark signifies the paper on which writers write, and hence I shall be discussing, or analysing written Aboriginal writing, rather than the rich oral traditions. This may seem a simple symbol easily understandable, but getting deeper into the symbol, or going from the paperbark to the paperbark tree, the dreaming symbol of the symbol, we reach Oodgeroo Nunacul, or if you wish Kath Walker, the noted Aboriginal poet.

During the coming together of the tribes in January 1988 in Sydney, I spoke to Oodgeroo, and she explained to me that her name Oodgeroo means *paperbark* and that as creative writers our totem, or dreaming should be the Paperbark tree. This seemed logical as the paperbark tree, or whitefella name *maleleuca*, or my country name, Mudrooroo, has always had an important place in Aboriginal life in that it has been used for *Myas*, roofing materials, for bandages and for drawings. And so, this has become our *Dreaming*, or our secondary totem, or our functional dreaming. Thus Kath Walker has taken, or changed her whitefella name to Oodgeroo Nunacul, and I have changed my name to Mudrooroo Naragin. Kath Walker's last name refers to her tribal name, the Nunacul tribe of Stradbroke Island, but in regard to my last name it refers to my place of birth in Western Australia. I have used a place name rather than a tribal name in that it is difficult to isolate the particular name of the tribe which owns that part of Western Australia, as we have coalesced into one people, the *Nyungar* and possibly one tribe, the *Bibbulmun* which I think refers more to the Swan River basin than to my area.

Now with paperbark out of the way, but not forgotten, for as it is the symbol of our dreaming, it grows within this paper so that it may take the shape of a paperbark tree, or the trunk, or the branches, or the leaves, or

the twigs, or the bark itself. *Dreamings* are potent forces and as the sap passes through the entire tree with the exception of the outermost bark, so the sap of the dreaming permeates this lecture and flows much like water in the channel of a river.

Firstly, I would like to start off with creative writing itself. I start here, at the root, because so much bullshit has been put forth on this subject, usually from a Western perspective beginning with the ego existing in splendid solitude and from this divine monad comes the great work. I, instead of seeing the ego as splendidly isolated, see it as being social, that is that man or woman is a social being and that the ego of man or woman is not only formed by society or by the community, but extends out from the head or beyond the skin, the bark, to thrust back into the community. There is really no inner or outer isolation, and the tree of the ego is swayed and moved more by what is happening around, the breezes, the earth, the touching hands of a human being, than by say, the sap rising from the roots and up the trunk and permeating each branch, twig and leaf. Naturally, if we did concentrate on the inner sap of the tree, its essence so to speak, we would find that it too is determined by outer things, the soil and its content, the rain, or moisture and so on. So it seems that this isolation, sometimes put out as being the abode of the writer and his ego, this splendid isolation is an illusion, or if you want, a man-made construct.

Now as to the creative act, which sounds so fine, if we ignore the fact that the creative act is often plagiarism which has to be explained away. I remember writing a paper on an example of deliberate plagiarism as method in the African writer Yambo Ouloguem's, *Le Devoir De Violence*, and the critics' reaction to this and to a further case of plagiarism by the white Australian writer, Thomas Keneally. Naturally, if you accept the concept of intellectual property this is stealing; naturally, if you accept the basis of the creative act as lying in 'Intertextuality' you don't. A plagiarist is someone who is found out. Now here, taking this a step further, before dropping it, or rather using it as the beginning or root of an analysis of a piece of my own writing, I would like to quote from the French theorist, Roland Barthes:

that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author – God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of cultures.' ('The Death of the Author,' in *Image-Music-Text*, Glasgow, Fontana, 1977, p. 146.)¹

This quotation should be kept in mind. Now first of all perhaps what all of us have been getting this year is *Celebration of a Nation*, which has two distinct meanings, or significations to what may be broadly separated into two centres of culture in Australia: the European – specifically, the Anglo-Celtic – and the Aboriginal.

Now these are not two binary oppositions, separate and distinct, but spill over into each other. A reading of a map of any suburb in the city of Brisbane shows an intermixture of these two cultures. Street names, road names, for example: *Burbong Road*. *Burbong* is a signifier of Aboriginality; *road*, of Europeaness, and if we extend this further both constitute a signifier of Australianness, and in a deeper reading may extend into the super-structure of Australian society to reveal the overall position of Europeans and Aborigines, for in Burbong Street or Road few Aborigines live, there are few signs of Aborigines, the roadside is divided into blocks holding European houses and so on. There is a marked absence of Aboriginality in the area except for that name, and perhaps a few names of houses, or intersecting roads. The indigenous people have gone away leaving only isolated words of their language to signify their absence. Now, I turn to my written text, rather than the text of a map, or the text of a suburb, though we must remain aware that any system of signs form a text which may be read, and by reading I mean only the deciphering as much as we are able to of a system of signs.

CELEBRATION OF A NATION.

Cockatoo folds down to the ground beside a tall broken-trunk tree emptied out by a long ago bushfire. Dark interior gleams in soft morning light breaking it wide open into the cubed edging of wood turned charcoal in that long ago fire, in that long ago burning into hollow log formed for this occasion, for cockatoo, yellow-sulphur crest, seeking to ignite that flame, to excavate that hollow, to fill it with the broken honeycomb of bones pulverised into broken cells oozing with honey, dripping with honey from the far north as a cry resounds, hoarsely like the crawl-crawling of crow biding his time, but missing his time as cockatoo takes the sound and unfolds, stealing the air with white wings as he circles in a heavy lazy floating of hot wings, once, twice and up into a green tree not too far away and green-lush with the hot sun baking earth brown, waiting for the gift of the north in that hoarse cry, that crow-call clawing at the fire bubbling with the blackened heavy drum filled water brown with the swirl of leaking

tea stains, swirling with leaves edging into the hot morning, reaching out a smell to cockatoo residing with this caravan, this righteous camp of souls urging hope regained in the ceremony. But the call comes again, clawing through to where Cookalingee dances her mock dance of despair in a show revealing death and survival, life and hope all suited-up and short-panted for a new dawn to commence.

Cookalingee, lithe young dancing body evading hard masculinity of occasion by partnering a chair. Inert fissures performing less a hopeful change than the eroded squares of charcoal fashioned fully for this occasion as Cookalingee whirls out her female dance of unable to endure yet enduring this time of mourning, this time of sadness, this time of celebration of youthful litheful dancer's body enduring a swirling of the air, of atonement, of past meals being prepared and discarded with no thought of this latter day engraved in the motions of her body encircling the chair, thrusting motion towards, receiving it back. Her dress fluttering, her hair fluttering, her arms eroding the urgency of cook house fire. Her energy, her youth seeking to engulf that chair. Heavy inertness, less than the tree charcoal under the hot sun of voices preparing bodies for the ceremony. Cookalingee sinking down in a crying at her lot, in a crying at the lot of her people responding to the calling, crow-calling, crawl-crawling from that camp site far from her dreaming place where now feet stamp out an encircled belief around the stillness of the body waiting for honeyed tree, crushed-bone tree, life-long tree oozing with honey dripping from the ruptured body cells.

Far north homeland green with many urgencies of plants flows down and withers into dry yellow dusks and air drained of moisture and life-giving ceremonies such as this being stamped out, performed sacred and entire, secret and meaningful beyond clicking camera booms and pens whispering words into black boxes re-arranging magnetic particles to record unknown records. Feet stamping, knees bending thudding the feet down, thudding the feet down. How, pow, puffs of dust rising, lingering on the crow call. Cockatoo watching safe in his near but far away tree as Cookalingee suffers her fate without knowing that she is suffering her fate in the dance, of feet thudding up particles of dust to manacle the magnetic re-arrangement of the atoms into an American voice questioning: 'Say, why do you think it's called Bennelong Point anyway?': To manacle the magnetic arrangement of the atoms into an American voice replying: 'Guess, because it's bin a long time since they owned it.'

And as the feet thud, and as a dancer stops to catch a still position on one thin black leg, then gives a quick convulsion simmering into discontent a black queen in a white queen's paraphernalia of long white gloves extruding to the elbow a nasalised

unhoneyed voice duly commanding a royal performance of the particles to cease, then start again in ordered lines of:

'My loyal subjects and all de men, I range over your faces and recall your pleasing vanities in selecting my husband and my royal self to be here, thus evading any unpleasantries in not only not being at home, but in being here in a somewhat darkened form, though smeared with the whiteness of my gloves as befitting the occasion dealing with the smearing of pipe clay somewhat resembling the sails of flocks of cockatoos circling overhead and tugging at dark bodies, sublime and horizontal of these my first ships touching these, our shores with the rotten hulks of despair and future crime. Do I hear the crawl-crawling of crow, is that the screeching of vivid livid sails? Sulphurous fumes decorate our heads. Our diadem glitters with the calling eyes of this, our day of mourning being celebrated in our subject, Cookalingee's dance. God bless her female heart and dishpan hands. Her warm body and subdued meant-for-better-things mind. It's in the gloves, the white gloves, cockatoo's crest, and the crawl-crawling of our subject, crow. Let them dance, coffin awaits them – but, but before then, a pause, a pause, magnetic particles record, this our refrain:

*A youthman was found hanging in his cell
On this our day, when everywhere the Aborigines
Were dancing, everywhere the Aborigines were marching.
They're just like us, is our quaint refrain,
They like balls and footy and songs and beer:
We ignore their call for Landrights!*

On Australia's day, a youthman strangled in a cell:

*Who killed him; who were his murderers?
Not I, said the cop, I only took him in.
Not I, said this town, I never spoke his name,
It's no fault of mine that he has to die –
We treat them as we do our own,
There's no racism in our town.*

*On this, our day a youthman dies while his people
Camp nearby trying to recover stolen land.
They daub this town with white and raise high*

*The Red, the Black and Gold.
The red is his blood,
The black his skin,
The gold our cause as bright as sun:
We want our land and there is no turning back.'*

A waving wink of a hand behind a smile as the ceremony continues with black bodies and faces gleaming behind the stains of white clay mourning the absence of ceremony at the site burdened with the tree excavated by the sulphurous crest of cockatoo lifting a gnarled claw to scratch out the rhythm of clap-sticks calling him away from pursuing didgeridoo droning out his place in the proceedings as Cookalingee gives a swirl light years away from the heavy stamp of heels scattering the dust particles and arousing the bees to spread out in a thick line of nectar-laden flight as the bones are crushed, hu,hu,hu,hu, into honeycomb slices as Cookalingee sinks down embracing her beloved chair heavy and inert, slippery with the scented sweating polish of her limbs aching and clutching in mourning the rounded body of the tree trunk, light and grey and quivering with the heated air as didgeridoo squawks cockatoo into a belated arrival of folding down right on the very ragged, blackened splinter of poor, fella tree: him gone along with that fella; him dead one now; him honey one now; him honeycomb now; him secreting the sweetness of Cookalingee – she little one, one time big with her hollow tree trunk filled with honeycomb, filled with honeycomb, sweet sap honey dripping. Her son, him bin hanged in that jail. Him bin died in that jail cell just yesterday time. Bub,buh,buh,buh,buh – didgeridoo calling crow lounging as Cookalingee stirs her loins all atremble to make the magnetic particles align themselves again American-wise.

'Say, what is this? Is this what you call a corroboree? Hey, you guys, this is a dinkum corroboree! And we can stay? And we can take pictures? Say, our folks back home will just love this!'

WARU, WARU! Attention, attention! Hey, hey, Cookalingee leaping to the rhythm of Warumpi Band dissipating the cries from the past. Cockatoo screeches the last of his didgeroo sounds. Tree quivers and becomes inert as the bones are laid to rest and the white clay soothes his sulphurous wounds and makes him whole enough for the bees to enter through his skull and plaster his insides with wax dripping with the yellow nectar of their flight. WARU, WARU, clak-crak, clak-crak, clak-crak, clak – measured rhythm of clap-sticks falter into syncopation. Mourn-ing, mourn-ing, mourn-ing, didgeridoo murmurs before picking up on the rhythm, cel-e-bration,

cel-e-bration, cel-e-bration. And their skins shine darkly under the full sun light and their skins shine whitely in the full sunlight as their bodies dance to cel-e-bration, cel-e-bration, cel-e-bration; ofa, ofa, ofa, ofa; nat shun, nat shun, nat shun – shunit, shunit, shunit...

THE END

Now what are we to make of my first paragraph, rather long and bereft of city signs. How are we to read it? Cockatoo is but a bird, or is he, and what is his relationship to the hollow tree, to fire? How are we to take this bird? How are we to take his role? If we seek to come to grips with this sign, it breaks open into an icon, as in the Mac computer, and this icon is symbol. Cookatoo as symbol. A blonde-haired white man with all that that entails for an Aborigine, but further, if we take into account Barthes' quotation in which he sees the texts as multi-dimensional and from numerous centres of culture, if we know that this piece of writing, this text is from an Aborigine we might look beyond the obvious, go into the icon to elicit further meanings. We must remain aware of the intertextuality of the text, and of the centre of Aboriginal culture, specifically localised here as northern. And again if we are or have been aware of the events of January, 1988, *Celebration of a Nation*, and of the caravan of people, traditional Aboriginal people travelling down to Sydney, this will make us consider that our icons may owe a great deal to Arnhem Land Culture, and again with the Aboriginal view of the celebration as being a celebration of survival, of an escape from genocidal practices added to media reports of an old man dying on the way to Sydney and ceremonies being conducted, we might make the connection that cockatoo is a bird associated with the funeral services in Arnhem Land, and if we know of the Djambidj cycle of ceremonies, we will be aware of this. Cockatoo is connected with funeral ceremonies and in our text this is brought out by a further icon of the hollow log, or hollow tree, and pulverised bones, referring to the method of finally laying to rest the deceased in Arnhem Land. Another icon in the text is crow, again a bird interested in everything about death. Crow is a bird who is a familiar of death. He does not hesitate to come close to it, whereas cockatoo prefers to keep his distance. Other icons remain to be deciphered, but I leave these with the comment that the caravan refers to the people travelling down from the north with their ceremonies to fertilise what they see as a land barren of Aboriginality. I stress that we are

not so much interested in whether this is true or not, but it is an ideological position held by people in Arnhem Land.

The last sentence of the paragraph introduces an icon as a character: *Cookalingee*. Here, there is a shift in that the traditional symbols or icons give way to one signifying Urban Aboriginal culture. The icon infolds a poem of Oodgeroo's, 'Cookalingee'. And the sign is meant to signify her poem and all that it contains, plus more, but we'll get to that. First, I'll give Oodgeroo's poem.

'COOKALINGEE' (For Elsie Lewis).

Cookalingee, now all day
Station cook in white man's way,
Dressed and fed, provided for,
Sees outside her kitchen door
Ragged band of her own race,
Hungry nomads, black of face.
Never begging, they stand by,
Silent, waiting, wild and shy,
For they know that in their need
Cookalingee give them feed.
Peering in, their deep dark eyes
Stare at stove with wide surprise,
Pots and pans and kitchen-ware,
All the white-man wonders there.
Cookalingee, lubra still
Spite of white-man station drill,
Knows the tribal laws of old:
'Share with others what you hold;'
Hears the age-old racial call:
'What we have belongs to all.'
Now she gives with generous hand
White man tucker to that band,
Full tin plate and pannikin
To each hunter, child and gin.
Joyful, on the ground they sit,

With only hands for eating it.
Then upon their way they fare,
Bellies full and no more care.

Cookalingee, lubra still,
Feels her dark eyes softly fill,
Watching as they go content,
Natural as nature meant.
And for all her place and pay
Is she happy now as they?
Wistfully she muses on
Something bartered, something gone.
Songs of old remembered days,
The walkabout, the old free ways.
Blessed with everything she prized,
Trained and safe and civilized,
Much she has that they have not,
But is hers the happier lot?

Lonely in her paradise
Cookalingee sits and cries.
(Oodgeroo Noonuccal)

There is one *last* thing to add about the final words of my first paragraph. These, 'a new dawn to commence' signifies Oodgeroo's second book of poetry: *The Dawn is at Hand*. (Brisbane, 1966)²

Cookalingee signifies urban culture, modern dance as opposed to traditional dance. The chair signifies dead wood, a manufactured article. Sydney or any city with its hardness of manmadeness: roads, and buildings, cars and life itself. But she is an Aborigine, and as she dances her city dance, the crow calls her to the camp site where the people from the north are conducting proper ceremonies. In Aboriginal dance, the feet stamp; in European dance, feet are but points and dancing appears to be an attempt to evade the solidity of gravity.

The third paragraph refers back to the camp site and the ceremony revitalising the south. Urban and Country come together. The reporters

and television crews that accompanied the caravan are referred to and encapsulated in Cockatoo in his near but far away tree. They are separated from the ceremony by not having the cultural knowledge from the Aboriginal centre. This is stressed by the American voices. Outside participants, though not unsympathetic, they cannot read the obvious, cannot make the connection between sign and signifier.

The ceremony is magical, is Aboriginal, and evokes a white response, strange and as distant to many people as the ceremonies of Aborigines' are. Directly, it is an intrusion, or a fragment of intertextuality, from Jean Genet's *The Blacks*; indirectly, it may refer, or be a referent to Roland Barthe's quotation. Death enters directly in a welter of icons or symbols, as the Drag Queen gives a version of the celebration and the invasion of Australia from black and white perspectives. It is her/his right as a complex icon. Beyond blackness and whiteness, beyond maleness and femaleness, partaking of both and of both, and of the original crime, and as perpetrator and victim, he/she re-iterates present crime and death. The poem she/he recites is from my collection: *The Song Circle of Jacky* (1984). The central stanza is built around the children's rhyme, *Who Killed Cock Robin*, which has been used for a number of folk songs including *Who Killed Norma Jean*, by Pete Seeger, and as such folk songs signify music in good standing with the Left, we have another icon or sign signifying the alliance, or support of the Aboriginal cause by the left. Nothing is simple it seems, though the last stanza is made up of direct signs signifying the meaning of the colours of the Aboriginal flag, though personalised in an individual dying a jail death.

The colour *white* as white pipe clay, or ash signifies mourning, a time of mourning, or in mourning. White in this text signifies this, among other things, for as I have said signs are icons which are symbols of things. They are complexities which may be broken down or built up just as texts may be built up or broken down. The perceiving of these signs is an act of reading with a reader who brings his own readability to the sign and the sign-system. Now when the icon of the queen disappears, the ceremony re-appears, though at a place marked with an absence of ceremony in the sense that the ceremonies that once belonged to this southern land have been forgotten and are no longer performed, though there is Cookalinee dancing out her dance in a theatre which is considered to be the remnants, or the evolution of the old magic circle, the *bora ring* from the Aboriginal centre, or the

amphitheatre from the European centre. Ceremonies and theatrical performances are magic, that is they are magic-invoking rituals, and so magic is present in my text. The funeral ceremony continues, the bones are crushed and as happens in the Djambidj ceremony, either symbolic or actual bees begin flying to make their hive in the hollow tree now filled with the pounded bones of the deceased.

It might be appropriate now to talk about some of the icons I have used:

Hollow tree, hollow log signifies a coffin. The bones are interred therein.

Bones: Skeletal human bones pounded into pieces. Reformed to serve as the cells for honey.

Honey: a complex icon. Meanings shift and signifiers disappear into the spiritual. It can signify a strong and potent food, mead, the buildup of a new body different from the old, even the vanished internal organs and flesh. In fact with the honey and the bees, the tree is reincarnated into the living. It more or less takes death away from death, and serves as a symbol of sweet endurance, rejuvenation, rebuilding, rebirth. Thus with the ceremony, a time of mourning, a time of sadness is rejuvenated into a time of gladness. The funeral ceremony is at the same time an increase ceremony, and is necessary for the continuation of the species.

This is shown in the paragraph after the poem and with the vanishing of the Drag queen, Cookalingee is seen as the mother of the young man who was killed in the jail cell. It is his funeral service we are witnessing and Cookalingee's dance is also a funeral service and both combine: country and urban, though all this is unseen by the iconic tourists. They see only what they are able to see.

In the last paragraph, the theme of celebration is taken up. The sense of this is that in Aboriginal culture death is an occasion for communities having the same moeity or Dreaming to come together in a ceremony, perform the rituals properly, then conduct any other business. It is a time of retying old ties and strengthening community links. An Aboriginal band, *Warumpi Band*, begins playing at the end of the funeral service. The whole rhythm changes. Mourning becomes celebration; but this is a celebration of increased hope. It is not for an actuality and so the rhythm continues *shunit, shunit, shunit*. For the celebration is not for the birth of white Australia, but for the survival of the Aborigines over the last two hundred years; of their coming together in Sydney; of the bringing down of ancient ceremonies from the north, and

of the laying to rest the corpse of the past. It is a celebration of hope for the future.

Traditional Aboriginal culture is a complexity which does not separate out a literature from ceremony or society. Literature is sung and any prose serves only as a commentary on the songs, though this is changing under the contemporary pressures of the modern world. Songs are to be sung and experienced in ceremonies or rituals, and the meanings vary to the degree as to how far a participant has entered into the complete spirituality of the community. Thus signs have changing signifiers with the significations depending on the knowledge of the recipient, or the reader. In the new Aboriginal writing, and by new Aboriginal writing, I signify writings by such writers as Lionel Fogarty, there has been a shift away from what has been a simple plea, or a writing slanted towards white people. A tool useful for understanding. This early writing did not result in a return of understanding, but an outrage of critics directed at such writings as being puerile and essentially not as good as European writing. Naturally, this attitude has always been directed at writing which tends towards the straight forwardness of propaganda, and at writing which is meant to be recited publicly, rather than pondered over in the quietness of a person's study. Aboriginal writing is often meant for public consumption in a public act such as before a crowd of people at a political meeting, and this makes for misunderstanding on the part of those critics who emphasise the aesthetic at the expense of the content, or message. Now, since the works of early Aboriginal writers who emphasised message and accessibility, Aboriginal writing has developed towards a spirituality interested in using and exploring the inner reality of Aboriginality in Australia. Naturally in doing this, there are problems in that there may be no readership for such a writing, or that those critics who dismissed Aboriginal writing for accessibility may now dismiss it for obscurity. A hope lies in the fact that literary criticism has developed new techniques in working with texts which may appear on the surface obscure. It is refreshing to find that we are far from the dreariness of the conventional: it doesn't rhyme, it doesn't scan, it's not grammatical, it's not poetry, it's not prose etc. etc.

When the Victorian English critic, Mathew Arnold formulated his question for the critic, he did not stress conventional grammar and sentence

structure as criteria for what is good and what is not, though he most likely accepted this as being beyond comment.

He formulated three questions:

1. What is the writer trying to do?
2. How well does he succeed in doing it?
3. Is it worth doing?

So what is the Aboriginal writer trying to do? Naturally, this varies according to the writer, and many critics and book reviewers still disparage a writer because they don't like what he or she is trying to do, or because he or she is not trying to do something else. This happened when Oodgeroo Nunaccul published her first books and it still continues among some critics and reviewers, though others have come to accept Aboriginal literature as a strong and vibrant Australian literature in its own right.

The second question demands creative reading from the reader. In fact there might not be a definite answer, or you may have to know something of modern critical practice to formulate an answer. One block which occurs here is that the reader when shown how he or she might change his or her reading habits, feels that such an approach destroys the pleasure of reading. Then we must ask what is this *pleasure*, and what are we reading for?

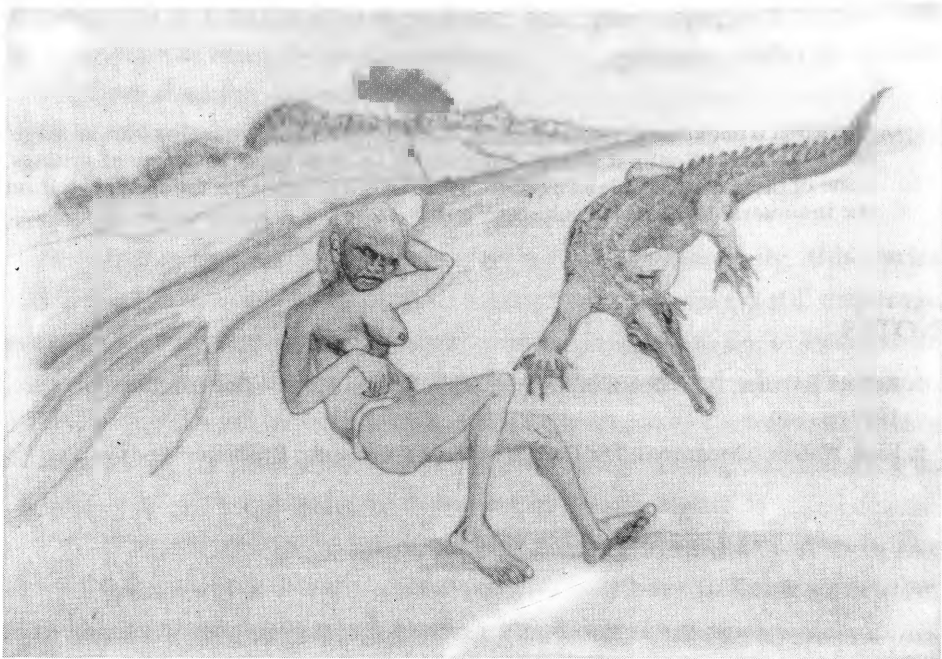
The third question: *Is it worth doing?* Art makes us aware of what we know and don't know that we know. Our conscious awareness, our ego, often seems to support the idea that we know all that we should know, or all that should be known. I see the ego as a master or mistress of illusion, and art and literature might help us to be aware that there is more to the ego than our heads, just as there is more to literature than standard sentences, standard grammar, standard modes of coping with reality. If it is impossible for us to, for example, change the colour of our skins, or even our sexual preferences, we can come to some understanding of other ways of being by reading about them. And when we begin formulating ideas on exactly why we are reading, why we want to put ourselves in the less than passive position of the reader, we then might begin growing and querying some of the things around us. The act of reading is important, and can be extended beyond books to the many texts surrounding us. Reading is a creative act, and may even extend into that of the creative writer, for after all a creative writer is usually a creative reader, which brings us full circle to the quotation I began

the body of this paper with, and which now with another reading might render up other meanings.

that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author – God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend or clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of cultures.'

NOTES

1. Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image – Music – Text* (Fontana, Glasgow, 1977) p. 146.
2. Kath Walker (Oodgeroo), *The Dawn is at Hand* (Jacaranda, Brisbane, 1966).



Butcher Joe (Nangan)

12 inches by 9 inches. Pencil and watercolour on paper

True story: eighteen century people aboriginals from Beagle Bay crossed the Desert came out Fittsroy River where telegraph line crossed before, That's before langgee So this woman from Beagle Bay. this. one woman middle aged went away across the desert that was soaked water some place dry anyway that women crossed the Plain she had enough water, she also had a sore head and she came to the telegraph line line before langgee. and she see's water right over the river. full river too langgee. That women she knows where water hole in river. sea water dries up women came down dia water hole she drank and she was tired and went to sleep under a tree. she didn't care who come's turn over

STORY NOT FINISHED

she was that sound asleep and at the same time
her hands and legs were weak and tired. all of a sudden
alligator see's her come in then drops off to sleep again
alligator comes real close to her alongside the woman
throw his hands over his shoulder. That old woman
she had a dream about his boyfriend she thinks
then she throw her hand over his shoulder. Then when
she looked properly she saw the alligator
she tried to escape but couldn't the alligator dragged
her into the water. The alligator dived deep into
the water still holding the leg of the woman. then
they swam up to the alligators home. Then that
woman was living with the alligator, he was a good man
fed her on raw meat. So that woman
watch now alligator go so she got
away to yeda station.